

US\$14 10/020,000, filed July 14, 2003
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REMARKS

Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 4-14, 22, 25-28, 33, 34 and 37-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over (1) the combination of US 4,786,505 to Lovgren et al. (the "'505 patent"), EP 0 426 479 ("EP '479") and US 6,136,344 to Depui et al. (the "'344 patent") *or* (2) the combination of the '344 patent and EP '479.

Each of the prior art combinations (1) or (2) includes the '344 patent. Applicants submit that the '344 patent does not qualify as prior art with respect to the claimed invention. Specifically, the effective prior art date of the '344 patent is 15 April 1996, i.e., the §371 date, which is later than the 8 January 1996 priority date of the subject application. Accordingly, each of the prior art combinations (1) and (2) is improper. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that pending claims 1, 4-14, 22, 25-28, 33, 34 and 37-45 are in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 23-1703 in the event that any fee is required in connection with this communication.

Dated: 1 June 2006

Respectfully submitted,



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